Nonpoint Source Management Program :: Wetlands and Riparian Areas



Wetlands and riparian areas (land areas along side of water bodies) provide important water quality protection for our surface waters. They do this by capturing pollutants in the rainwater that flows over or through them and by slowing the rate of stormwater runoff. Pollutants that may be ?trapped? by these lands include phosphorus and nitrogen, sediments, metals, and potentially pathogens. By slowing the rate of runoff, wetlands and riparian areas also provide physical protection for streambanks and other habitat in water bodies that receive runoff. Vegetated riparian areas also help maintain stream water temperature and provide food for aquatic life.

These natural buffering systems are adversely affected by any activity that paves over them, fills them in, alters flows through them, or removes their natural vegetation. Maintaining these systems and the functions they serve, is a pollution prevention measure. Restoring wetlands and riparian areas can be an effective means of improving water quality as well as habitat in the water bodies

that they buffer.

Wetland and stream impacts are regulated at the federal level by the <u>US Army Corps of Engineers</u> and at the state level by the <u>Division of Water Quality's Wetlands/401 Certification Unit</u>. The NC Division of Coastal Management is also involved with <u>regulating wetland impacts</u> at the coast through their CAMA permitting process and possesses extensive information regarding wetlands in the coastal region and impact minimization techniques.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources also houses the <u>Ecosystem Enhancement Program</u> - a nonregulatory program originally established by the NC General Assembly in 1996 as the Wetlands Restoration Program - to restore wetlands, streams and streamside (riparian) areas throughout the state. This program uses a systematic approach to set restoration priorities based on restoration need and restoration opportunity.

Two major sources of funding for wetlands and riparian area protection at the state level are the NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund and the 319(h) Grant Program. Other programs typically associated with agriculture may also be sources of funding, as are trust funds and other private organizations.

At the federal level, a potential source of funding for a project is the Wetland Development Grant Program administered by

the <u>US Environmental Protection Agency's Wetland Program</u>. The goals of this program are to increase the quantity and quality of wetlands in the United States by conserving wetland acreage and improving wetland health. Other potential federal funding sources may be identified by searching the federal website <u>One-Stop Shop: The Federal Commons</u> to search the catalog of federal grant programs.

Wetlands and Riparian Areas Links

Regulatory Agencies

- US Army Corps of Engineers
- NC Division of Coastal Management wetlands regulations
- NC Division of Water Quality's Wetlands/401 Certification Unit
- US Environmental Protection Agency's Wetlands Program
- The Federal Commons One-Stop Shop Web Site
- Guidance Specifying Management Measures for Sources of Nonpoint Pollution in Coastal Waters
- North Carolina Ecosystem Enhancement Program (nonregulatory)

Funding Sources

- NC Clean Water Management Trust Fund
 NC 319(h) Grant Program
 One-Stop Shop: The Federal Commons